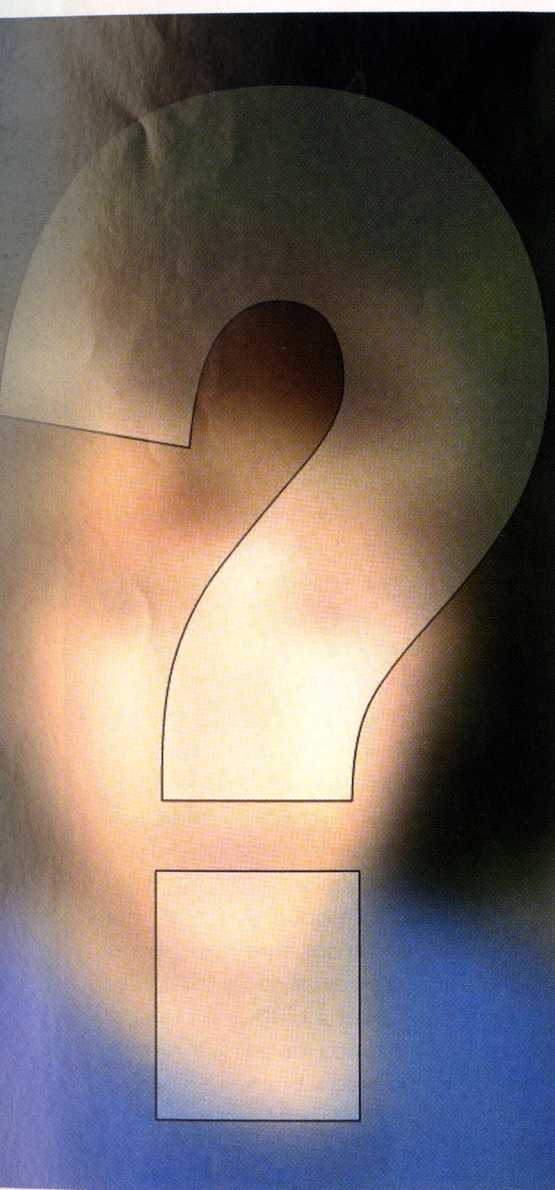


THE 18TH OF MARCH CELEBRATION: AN IMPORTANT DAY IN THE SEARCH FOR THE ARUBAN IDENTITY



During cultural days, as the 18th of March, we look around and we feel more identified with our national symbols. Cars driving around with miniature flags on their window, homes raise their flags, businesses all over the island decorate their premises, TV and radio spots and program's dedicated to the festivity, competition and tournaments named after the 18th of March celebration, government protocol events, and even a license plate was specially designed for the occasion.

These forms of cultural manifestation, give us the impression of a very patriotic and proud nation – besides that it is a commercially very lucrative. Patriotic in the sense that Arubans have the attitude to preserve and celebrate certain traditional events. These are very positive characteristics.

Patriotism is described as the positive and supportive attitudes to a "fatherland" by individuals and groups. It is the identification of being part of a whole. It is the recognition of the belonging to a certain community or nation. Patriotism fortifies the commitment and identification of a person towards its cultural and historical heritage. This form of recognition and identification is without any doubt present in our society.

The sense of the Aruban identity did not just come about. Historical events describe the factors that led Aruba to the Aruba we know today. A historical review will be presented on the important dates, actors, events that led us to the Aruba, we know today.

Already in 1931 the Council of Police – the local authority – sent a petition to Holland requesting a higher level of independent decision making vis á vis Curacao.

The nationalistic feeling was reinforced during the 1940's. In 1942 H.M. Queen Wilhelmina announced restructuring of the Kingdom of The Netherlands after the World War II. The struggle then called "Separacion" was guided by Mr. J.H. A. "Henny" Eman (1887-1957). The division from the Netherlands Antilles was the main goal of this struggle. Aruba felt its position within the current constellation wasn't at our best interest. The political nationalism was the thriving force behind the "separacion" struggle.

In January 1948, 2147 Aruban citizens undersigned the petition that was sent to H.M. Queen Wilhelmina, requesting the financial, economic, administrative and governmental independence from the central government Curacao. On the 18th of March,